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**UNITED STATES AND ALBANIA CONFIRM CONCLUSION OF  
BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS ON TERMS FOR WTO ACCESSION**

United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky and Albanian Minister of Economic Cooperation and Trade, the Honorable Ermelinda Meksi, today confirmed conclusion of bilateral negotiations for the terms of Albania's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) with an exchange of documents in Washington, D.C. Signaling the importance of this milestone, Albanian Prime Minister Pandeli Majko and Finance Minister Anastas Angjeli also were in attendance. Additionally, Congressman Eliot L. Engel, the Chairman of the Albanian Issues Caucus, attended the bilateral signing, stressing the need for strong U.S. -Albanian relations.

"The United States and Albania enjoy a strong and close relationship, sharing a commitment to peace, democracy, and economic development in the Balkans. Albania's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) will further strengthen our bilateral trade relationship," stated United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky. "Albania's commitments in these negotiations are part of the broader accession negotiations that are conducted in Geneva." The promotion of rules-based free markets and recognition of the important role trade plays in sustainable economic growth is at the core of the WTO and of the international trading system that the U.S. is working to build," continued Ambassador Barshefsky. "Albania is working hard to overcome the problems of its Communist past, to become a part of the world trading system, and to give the Albanian people the prosperity and democracy they desire."

"We look forward to working with Albania within the WTO system on a day-to-day basis and in the new Round of negotiations to be launched later this year in Seattle," stated Ambassador Barshefsky.